

Mountain climbing raises money for stem cell research, Parkinson's disease

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A group of Parkinson's disease patients and family members have hit on a new twist to athletic fundraisers. Forget the local charity 10K race - they are hiking 19,000 foot Mt. Kilimanjaro in Tanzania to raise money for The Scripps Research Institute's Center for Regenerative Medicine, headed by CIRM grantee Jeanne Loring.

Loring has CIRM grants to understand what makes a stem cell a stem cell, to define ways of purifying stem cells and to help prevent the immune system from rejecting transplanted stem cells. She is also part of a project to develop stem cell-based therapies for Parkinson's disease, which this trek will help fund.

A North County Times story describes the project like this:

“ The stem cells will be produced from human skin cells of patients, transformed into IPS cells, then grown into the proper kind of cells. In the case of Parkinson's patients, these will be dopamine-making neurons. If all goes well, these replacement cells will be transplanted into the patients, making the missing dopamine, and relieving or curing their symptoms. Because the transplants will be autologous, immune reaction is not expected to be a problem.

On August 4, Loring and other members of the research team discussed their research with the group, organized as Summit4StemCell.

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